



News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 31st Congressional District of California

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Statement of Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis on *Environmental Effects of Gravel Mining in Irwindale, CA: Basic Information Is Not Available to Assess Health and Environmental Risks to the Community*

"People have a right to know what is going on in their community, especially when it comes to protecting the health and well-being of their families. Today's report reveals that the communities surrounding the gravel pits of Irwindale do not have basic information about the environmental and health impacts of regional gravel operations. What is even more disconcerting is that the local, state and federal agencies responsible for oversight have little information on the quantity of air pollutants released since they do not regularly monitor the mining operations.

For decades, residents of this community have suspected that mining operations have been affecting their health. However, they have had no data to back up this belief. Earlier this year, Congressman Henry Waxman and I asked the Environmental Protection Agency to study the environmental health of this region in relation to the gravel pits. Although the data was extensive, it failed to provide us with any specific information about the health of our air or water as a result of gravel operations. In addition, it was obvious that an average citizen would not have the ability to access or interpret this extensive, cryptic information.

The data that was provided revealed that the current limited monitoring does not provide us with information to accurately understand how air or water is affected by gravel operations. Air monitors are stationed in areas where it would be almost impossible to identify gravel-specific information. And, despite the fact that many of these operations have hit the water table, water monitors are still not required or used in most cases.

Every community should have the tools to make good decisions for their families. That is why we need a further in-depth environmental and health study. In addition, the EPA and other federal, state and local regulators need to work together and exercise their authority to enforce our laws. Congress also needs to take an active role and make sure that there is funding available for agencies to perform their oversight duties. Finally, we need to educate the public about protecting their families and understanding the environmental health of our region. This will help our community make sound decisions and protect our loved ones.

Over 35,000 people suffer from asthma in our region. Yet we don't have the information to understand why this high number exists. It is time that we turn suspicion into fact and understand the impact of the gravel industry on our health and environment."

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